United Nations A/63/234

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 October 2008
English
Original: Russian

Sixty-third session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-third session

Granting of observer status for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the General Assembly

Letter dated 6 October 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Granting of observer status for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the General Assembly".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) and related draft resolution (annex II) are attached to this letter.

We should be grateful if the text of this letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) B. S. **Aitimova**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) N. J. **Jeenbaev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations

(*Signed*) S. M. **Aslov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan
to the United Nations

08-55245 (E) 161008 161008

(*Signed*) A. T. **Ataeva**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) A. V. **Vohidov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan
to the United Nations

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. The Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan are the founders of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), which operates on the basis of the status agreed by the Central Asian Heads of State on 9 April 1999 at Ashgabat.

2. The Aral environmental crisis is the result of an ill-considered policy regarding the environment and the use of natural resources. The main reason is the excessive use of water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers for irrigation. This has led to the shrinking of the Aral Sea and has had an effect of unprecedented magnitude on the environment of the Central Asian region and neighbouring States.

3. Economic losses from the Aral crisis, climate change, hydrochemical features of water bodies, curtailment of fishing in the Aral Sea, degradation of over 4 million hectares of land and loss of biodiversity in the region total several billion dollars a year.

4. The continuing deterioration of the environmental situation is exerting a direct and indirect negative influence on the living conditions and health of over 35 million inhabitants of the Aral Sea Basin and preventing normal economic activities. Overall, this is causing an increase in migratory movements in the region.

5. Despite the existence of certain national and regional regulatory and legal provisions, IFAS institutional structures and some assistance from international organizations, donor countries, leading international financial institutions and social and other organizations, it has not been possible, because of the huge amount of work to be done and the lack of coordination, to stabilize the ecological crisis situation in the Aral Sea Basin.

6. The International Decade of Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, the existence of a large number of strategic instruments adopted at the global, regional, subregional and national levels with due attention to them and the coordinated efforts of governments, international organizations and donor countries can provide additional constructive impetus for the solution of the problems of the Aral environmental crisis, which has planetary dimensions.

7. In the Dushanbe Declaration of 6 October 2002, the Central Asian Heads of State urged international organizations and institutions to create the necessary conditions in their activity to attract resources for the implementation of projects and programmes in the Aral Sea Basin and initiated a new Programme of Action for the period 2003-2010. Reference was also made to the need to create a special United Nations commission responsible for coordinating the activities of international organizations and donors to solve the problems of the Aral Sea Basin.

8. With a view to enhancing cooperation and partnership between IFAS, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in solving the problems of the Aral Sea Basin, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded on 3 June 2004, which was one of the practical steps taken to promote joint efforts to resolve the Aral Sea crisis.

9. In the recommendations and appeal made at the International Conference on Regional Cooperation in Transboundary River Basins organized from 30 May to 1 June by the Government of Tajikistan with the assistance of the United Nations and other organizations, the participants welcomed the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan to prepare a partnership agreement of all stakeholders for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the completion of the second phase of the Aral Sea Basin Programme by 2010, with the adoption of concrete obligations and the creation of favourable conditions for investments.

The participants also appealed to the United Nations to consider the possibility of implementing the Dushanbe Declaration of Central Asian Heads of State of 6 October 2002 on the creation of a mechanism to coordinate the activities of international organizations and donors, under United Nations auspices, for the solution of the problems of the Aral Sea Basin and to declare the Basin a high-priority pilot region for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

10. The Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan are of the view that, although the current problems of the Aral Sea Basin do not stem from a lack of international support, there is nevertheless a need for more effective and targeted measures and more specific and direct cooperation between the States of the region and the United Nations and other international organizations and donors through IFAS. As a first step, IFAS should be granted observer status in the United Nations General Assembly so that it can initiate various measures designed to improve the environmental, social and economic situation in the Aral Sea Basin.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Granting of observer status for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea,

1. *Decides* to allow the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly as an observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to implement this resolution.